



# Volunteering as a station partner

Caring for our people, customers  
and communities

Great Northern

**GX**

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SOUTHERN

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WE'RE WITH YOU

# Welcome

from our Managing Directors



Angie Doll, Managing Director  
**Southern & Gatwick Express**

Thank you for your interest in becoming one of our station partners. This booklet should give you everything you need to know about the scheme, which has been playing a vital role in helping communities get the most from their stations for over ten years.

If you decide to sign up you'll be joining many others who tirelessly play a role in providing a link between our railway and the community it serves. As well as being highly rewarding, it's an excellent way to involve and get to know other people from your neighbourhood who are also keen to volunteer.

There are many benefits to being a station partner, from improving your health and wellbeing and making new friends, to improving confidence and developing specialist skills.

We have featured some of our existing partners in this booklet to demonstrate the amazing projects they have undertaken, as well as offering some inspiration. Whether it's introducing a community book swap scheme, displaying historic station photos in a waiting room or looking after hanging baskets, there is something for everyone. Our dedicated teams are available to discuss any ideas you have and how we might be able to provide funding to make them a reality.

This booklet explains the benefits of being a station partner and includes a step-by-step guide on how to become one. We have tried to keep the process as simple as possible and we'll be delighted to help with any questions you have.

Thank you for taking the time to consider being a station partner.

For further information please contact us at [community@gtrainway.com](mailto:community@gtrainway.com)



Tom Moran, Managing Director  
**Thameslink & Great Northern**

Cover photo: 'It seems they enjoyed their visit' – schoolchildren enjoying a visit to St Albans Signal Box Museum. Photo courtesy of Beds & Herts Community Rail Partnership.

Note: some of the photographs used in this document were taken before the Covid-19 pandemic.

## What are the benefits of station partnerships?

One of the major benefits is creating a sense of community and inclusion, where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together to make a positive difference to their community and forge lasting friendships. Volunteering is a very sociable and satisfying activity, as well as benefiting the health and wellbeing of individuals taking part. You can develop new skills and give yourself a sense of achievement when improving your surrounding environment.

Furthermore, creating partnerships with local schools, community groups, charities and businesses can foster a sense of community spirit and promote access to, and understanding of the railway across diverse groups. These can sometimes lead to further projects being initiated across the community.

Another major benefit is the opportunity to enhance the appearance of your local station, which is often the first sight a visitor will have of your area, creating a warm and welcoming gateway to your community. Many of our partners look after the beautiful gardens and planters at their local station or showcase stunning art projects enhancing the travel experience for our passengers. This can have added benefits, such as encouraging rail use and helping to reduce anti-social behaviour.



Station partnerships:  
involving the community

Other benefits are often achieved through specific projects, such as promoting awareness of sustainable travel or environmental issues, improving station access such as walking and cycling paths, or bringing disused station property back into community use.

## Showcasing station partners

The 'All Boarders' at Welwyn Garden City celebrated the town's centenary in 2020 with a display of pre-war posters advertising the town. The station was repainted in heritage colours and interpretation boards were installed to present the station's history.



Friends of Angmering station created a bee-friendly garden in collaboration with Artworks, Men in Sheds and children from a local primary school.



Beds & Herts Community Rail Partnership regularly arranges 'Try a Train' events with local schoolchildren to enable them to travel independently by train and teach them about rail safety.

Southwick Art Project is working with a community artist and Concordia (an international charity for upskilling young people), Shoreham Port and Pilbeam, by offering work placements. The young people researched the maritime heritage of the port and created tile art to be displayed at the station.



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Be bold and imaginative, but

## Hints and tips for forming station partnerships



Michael Solomon Williams from the 'Friends of Ally Pally Station' gives his top tips on being a successful station partner.

The group have an extremely successful partnership at Alexandra Palace station, with a range of plants and tubs being donated by the local community. In 2017, just a year after they started, the group was shortlisted for a Community Rail Network award and have since received several additional awards from them, as well as Rail Partnerships, Haringey in Bloom, and more.

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**"At Ally Pally we have made a point of involving lots of different stakeholders, including schools, existing community groups, businesses large and small, musicians and individuals."**

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### **What ideas do you have?**

"I would recommend having a strong initial idea but do remain open to new suggestions. There are many possibilities – even just with plants! Perhaps, as in our case, your local garden centre might help you get off the ground by donating some pots or compost.

"In terms of administration and long-term health, if you are forming a new group it's a good idea to have a constitution and a bank account. You may want to form a committee and allocate roles."

### **The practical side – what do you need?**

"GTR offers money to help with some of the set-up costs, but you may need to consider external funding, especially for ongoing costs. This might be from your borough council, parish council, local businesses, Community Rail Network or grant-making groups. Alternatively, group members may be able to donate equipment or resources to help.

"In our case, we were born out of the generosity of the local garden centre, a few businesses and lots of locals who brought plants and plant pots. From that point we have found funds to cover any further costs."

**also be organised!**





## How to become a station partner

Set out below are the steps required to become a station partner. We will assist you in the process, providing our time and some funds to help you get set up. Please follow all the guidelines in the order set out below for the safety of yourselves, our staff and passengers.

<b>1</b>	The group meets the Station Manager and the Community Engagement Officer to discuss their ideas and agree on the work they would like to do.
<b>2</b>	The group and Station Manager sign the station partnership form (see page 11) and the group outlines the funding required to set up the project and ongoing work. We will consult with you and consider this request and provide what we can towards these costs.
<b>3</b>	The group completes the GTR Method Statement form for the Station Manager for review (it's useful to make notes at the initial meeting and look at the examples given).
<b>4</b>	The group submits the method statement and risk assessment, along with a Site Access Permit (SAP) application form to the GTR property team.
<b>5</b>	The GTR property team will review the application and respond within ten working days. They will either issue a SAP for each group member, or request amendments to the submitted paperwork.
<b>6</b>	The group meets the Station Manager for a safety briefing.



Station partnerships:  
making a positive difference

## Points to note

A Site Access Permit (SAP) is required for all works. If you require access to carry out maintenance activities (eg watering plants) you can apply for a permit which is valid for a year.

If you are undertaking a one-off project (eg the installation of artwork) then the application must cover the duration of the project. When applying for a SAP, consider all the works you wish to undertake and when they need to happen.

When you are putting together your method statement, you need to consider the impact of your work on your people, as well as our staff and passengers. We strongly recommend that you take notes when conducting your site visit with the Station Manager, which will help you to write up your agreed way of working.

The Station Manager will be able to guide you on what hazards need to be considered and managed when you put your method statement together.

In accordance with the station partnership agreement, by having a SAP following the agreed method in your method statement and risk assessment, you will be covered under our public liability insurance. Once the group has their SAP, they are allowed to carry out activities at the station.

At the start of each visit to the station, the group will need to sign in, show their SAPs and receive a site-specific safety briefing. Only then will works be allowed to commence.

If you have a SAP which is valid for a year, it is the group's responsibility to renew the permit. Don't worry – we will remind you when it is due. If nothing has changed in the work undertaken, you will only need to review the paperwork and resubmit an application.

If throughout the year there are any significant changes to the work you are doing at the station, for example in terms of how you wish to undertake it or if the activities themselves change, you must apply for an updated SAP.

We are very appreciative of the wonderful work that station partners do and we want everyone to enjoy their time and be safe in the station environment, which is why for all work undertaken there must be a valid SAP in place.



## Equal opportunities

We welcome applications from all groups and individuals regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sex, or sexual orientation. We seek to be representative of all the communities that we serve and wish to actively promote participation for groups and individuals that are underrepresented within communities.

## How we can assist you

We are more than happy to talk through your ideas with you. Please bear in mind that the operational nature of the railway means that not everything may be possible, however we are always keen to look at what can be done.

We will provide examples for the method statements and risk assessments. We can also provide budget templates, car parking permits (if needed), as well as officer support.

Funds are available from us to help new station partners get off the ground. You may also be eligible for funds from other sources in your area. We can offer support here also (or direct you to the people who can!)

We will provide regular updates on activities and events.

We will also provide safety briefings for all volunteers working at our stations.



Station partnerships:  
improving the environment



# Community rail partnership contact details

Community rail is a growing grassroots movement made up of community rail partnerships and groups across Britain. They engage communities and help people get the most from their railways, promoting social inclusion and sustainable travel, working alongside train operators to bring about improvements, and bringing stations back to life.

There are nine Community Rail Network partners across the GTR network covering many of our stations. To find out if your local station is covered by one, please contact us for more information. We'll introduce you to them if there is one covering your area.

Useful websites		
Community Rail Network	<a href="http://communityrail.org.uk">communityrail.org.uk</a>	
Southeast Communities Rail Partnership	<a href="http://southeastcrp.org">southeastcrp.org</a>	
Beds & Herts CRP	<a href="http://bandhcrp.org.uk">bandhcrp.org.uk</a>	
Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton CRP	<a href="http://meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail.org.uk">meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail.org.uk</a>	
Darent Valley CRP	<a href="http://visitsevenoaksdistrict.co.uk">visitsevenoaksdistrict.co.uk</a>	

## Safety briefing note

The information below, alongside the site briefing you will receive, is designed to give you the information you need to stay safe whilst taking part in activities on the station. These must be followed by all volunteers when working on our stations.

### Your own safety must be your first concern at all times.

- Never put yourself at personal risk
- Do not carry out work at a station whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Never go on the track or work near the platform edge
- Never leave equipment unattended or where it will block access to a station/train or form a trip hazard
- Do not obstruct any paths or access points
- Where a foot crossing is provided, only use it when necessary, and follow all instructions provided
- Only carry out work covered by your SAP
- Follow any instructions given to you by railway staff and show them your SAP when you arrive at the station. Our staff may request to see your SAP at any time – please make sure you show it
- Do not act in a way that could jeopardise the safety of yourself or anyone else using the railway when on or near the station
- Keep well away from the platform edge – at least four feet (unless boarding a train)
- Never touch any exposed electrical wiring or equipment. Report any defects to station staff immediately

### Alcohol and drugs policy

All station partners must comply with our alcohol and drugs policy.

We have a zero tolerance to any use of alcohol or drugs.

Partners must not carry out any visits or duties at stations or on the network if they are under the influence of, or have recently consumed alcohol or drugs, nor must they consume them whilst carrying out a visit or duties.

This applies to all employees and contractors and is extended to station partners carrying out duties at stations or on the network.

If this policy is not followed, the partner will be permanently excluded from the station partnership scheme.

# Station partnership agreement

As part of your commitment to becoming a station partner, please complete the details below. By signing this form, you are confirming that you will comply with the terms and conditions of the station partnership scheme.

Name of station partnership:

I confirm that I wish to be part of a station partnership at:

I have read and understood the terms and conditions, the safety brief and alcohol and drugs policy, and I, and my group, will abide by them at all times.

Name (please PRINT):

Signature:

Contact email:

Contact number:

Date:

Project overview (brief description):

**Please take a photograph or scan the completed form and email it to [community@gtrailway.com](mailto:community@gtrailway.com)**

**Please note** – we record these details so that we can keep in contact with you, including inviting you to our events. We will not pass on your details to others, without asking you first. If your details change or need updating, please contact GTR's corporate social responsibility team on [community@gtrailway.com](mailto:community@gtrailway.com)

If you decide to end your partnership with us, please inform both your Station Manager and the corporate social responsibility team. We will take time to discuss the ending of our work together, including ensuring that we delete your details from our records.

**To be completed by the Station Manager:**

I confirm support of this group adopting the named station:

Name (please PRINT):

Signature:

Contact number:

Contact email:



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